

In the Claims

Please cancel claims 1, 3, 4, 6-7, 12-30, 43, 44, 46-72, 77-82 and 84-105 and amend claim 8, consistent with the following listing of the claims:

1-7. (Canceled).

8. (Currently amended) ~~The method of claim 6 wherein modifying the header section in said predetermined way includes~~ In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of another user in the first user group and a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said e-mail message including a header section, which contains information regarding the originating user and the intended recipient, a method comprising:

after said e-mail message has been composed and sent via a standard messaging protocol by an originating user of the first user group, directing the e-mail message onto an e-mail enhancement path, including (i) receiving the e-mail message at said first server, (ii) altering the e-mail message including separating and modifying the header section in a predetermined way by inactivating said information regarding the originating user and intended recipient contained in the header section, and adding an alternate header section containing active information regarding an alternate sender and an alternate message recipient, and (iii) directing the altered e-mail message to a second server located on the e-mail enhancement path; adding additional rich media content to said e-mail message using the e-mail enhancement path to produce an enhanced e-mail message; and thereafter, directing the enhanced e-mail message from the e-mail enhancement path to the intended recipient.

9. (Previously amended) The method of claim 8 wherein said inactivating includes adding a predetermined prefix to the originating user and intended recipient information contained in the header section such that said information is inactivated.

10. (Previously amended) The method of claim 8 wherein said adding the alternate header section includes specifying said second server as the alternate message recipient.

11. (Previously amended) The method of claim 8 wherein said directing the enhanced message to the intended recipient includes

deleting the alternate header section, and

reactivating the originating user and intended recipient information contained in the header section of the e-mail message.

12-44. (Canceled).

45. (Previously amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a method comprising:

- prior to sending the e-mail message from a Mail Transport Agent (MTA) via a standard messaging protocol, adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message and placing the email message en route to the intended recipient using the MTA, thereby directing the e-mail message to a first location inside the firewall;

- at the first location, identifying the request for desired additional rich media content in the e-mail message and providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content according to a predetermined set of rules;

- forwarding the e-mail message to a second location outside the firewall;

- at the second location, adding the desired additional rich media content to said e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message; and

- thereafter, redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

46-82. (Canceled).

83. (Previously presented) The method of claim 45, wherein adding the request for desired additional rich media content occurs after the e-mail message has been sent via the standard messaging protocol of Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

84-105. (Canceled).